

# Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: Self-assessment form

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code			
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No
	<p>Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?</p> <p><i>An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.</i></p>	Yes	
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes	
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services, persons or bodies over which the Group has no control;</li> <li>• Initial requests for service e.g. reporting a repair or where you are telling us about a problem for the first time (unless this relates to staff behaviour);</li> <li>• A claim for damages or personal injury which will be dealt with by our Insurers as an insurance claim;</li> <li>• Attempts to reopen or reconsider a complaint where we have already provided a final decision;</li> <li>• Matters which are, or could reasonably be expected to be the subject of court or tribunal proceedings or which are in the hands of the Group's Insurers;</li> <li>• Complaints arising from the ending of a tenancy as part of the starter tenancy procedures;</li> <li>• Complaints of neighbour nuisance or disputes between neighbours that are dealt through our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policies, unless these complaints relate to how we have dealt with the matter;</li> <li>• Complaints that have not been brought to our attention within six months after the incident - complaints outside of this time though can be considered at the discretion of the Customer Services Manager if there is evidence to suggest it would be unreasonable not to.</li> </ul> <p>Exclusions most recently reviewed in 2020 in consultation with involved tenants and Tenant Committee</p>	Yes	
2	Accessibility		
	<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> <p>In person, by telephone, in writing, by email via our website and social media</p>	Yes	

	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes	
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? Reasonable Adjustments statement published on website	Yes	
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? Website, customer leaflets, newsletter, Annual Report	Yes	
<b>3</b>	<b>Complaints team and process</b>		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? Customer Feedback Coordinator and Customer Feedback Manager	Yes	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? The Customer Feedback Team have autonomy to resolve informally to prevent formal escalation and where necessary can offer apologies, goodwill gestures and arrange/organise appropriate action to put things right.	Yes	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes? The Customer Feedback Team refer complaints to the appropriate service manager which is also shared with the Senior Manager at time of referral to encourage early resolution.	Yes	
	If there is a third stage to the complaint's procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	N/A	
	Is any third stage optional for residents? Stage 3 removed from policy July 2020	N/A	
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? Standard paragraph is added to all Stage 2 responses – 'This stage two response forms the final part of the Group's internal complaints procedure. If you remain dissatisfied with the response you can either refer the matter to a designated person or wait 8 weeks and refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman directly yourself. Enclosed for you is a leaflet with more details on the options now available to you.'  <b>NB</b> WCHG is aware of the forthcoming changes to the 8 week period prior to Ombudsman contact, as outlined in the Social Housing white paper of November 2020 and will update our communications accordingly once this change comes into effect	Yes	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident? Complaint file for each resident/address with documentation stored managed by Customer Feedback Team.	Yes	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved? Based on 2020-2021 data.	1st	
<b>4</b>	<b>Communication</b>		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? Through acknowledgement letter/email/telephone call, contact from investigating manager, and interim response (where required).	Yes	

	<p>Are residents informed of the landlord’s position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision? <a href="#">Contact and discussion is encouraged throughout the complaint process between manager and resident.</a></p>	<b>Yes</b>	
	<p>Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days? <a href="#">Within 2 days.</a></p>	<b>Yes</b>	
	<p>Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage? <a href="#">Standard final paragraph –</a>  <b>Stage 1</b>  <a href="#">If you are not satisfied with this response you can ask for your response to be considered for a review at the next stage of our complaints process. To proceed on that basis you can contact the customer feedback team and talk to them about the reasons why you are unhappy and they can let you know the different options available to you. You can contact them by calling 0800 633 5500 or by emailing <a href="mailto:complaints&amp;praise@wchg.org.uk">complaints&amp;praise@wchg.org.uk</a> or writing to us at the address above. You will need to do this within 28 days of receiving this written response to your complaint.</a>  <b>Stage 2</b>  <a href="#">This stage two response forms the final part of the Group’s internal complaints procedure. If you remain dissatisfied with the response you can either refer the matter to a designated person or wait 8 weeks and refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman directly yourself. Enclosed for you is a leaflet with more details on the options now available to you.</a>   <b>NB</b> <a href="#">WCHG is aware of the forthcoming changes to the 8 week period prior to Ombudsman contact, as outlined in the Social Housing white paper of November 2020 and will update our communications accordingly once this change comes into effect</a></p>	<b>Yes</b>	
	<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? <a href="#">Based on 2020-2021 data.</a></p>	<b>80%</b>	
	<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? <a href="#">Based on 2020-2021 data.</a></p>	<b>98%</b>	
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <a href="#">Based on 2020-2021</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage one  Stage one (with extension)</li> <li>• Stage two  Stage two (with extension)</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">105 stage one complaints 2020-21 – 13 extended – 0 over code timescales</a>  <a href="#">21 stage two complaints 2020-21 – 7 extended – 0 over code timescales</a></p>	<b>88%</b> <b>100%</b> <b>67%</b> <b>100%</b>	
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?  <a href="#">Acceptable reasons include</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">At the request of the customer</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Waiting for third party information/evidence that is required for the response</a></li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b>	

	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed? Where an extension is required, the Customer Feedback Team issues an interim response to the customer.	Yes	
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction	76%	
<b>5</b>	<b>Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service</b>		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? 2 cases 2020-21 – all information was provided within the required timescales.	Yes	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A	
<b>6</b>	<b>Fairness in complaint handling</b>		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	Yes	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? Based on 2020-2021 data. What was the reason for the refusal? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2020-21 the Group refused to escalate 2 complaints from stage one to stage two from the same customer</li> <li>Both of these complaints had received a stage one response. Escalation to stage two was refused due to there being no new information to consider</li> <li>Both of these complaints were then referred by the customer to the Housing Ombudsman Service</li> </ul>	2	
	Did we explain our decision to the resident? All residents are informed in writing of the reasons for the refusal to escalate and advised of the next steps available to them including designated person and Housing Ombudsman Service.	Yes	
<b>7</b>	<b>Outcomes and remedies</b>		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? These include - acknowledging what has gone wrong, apologising, putting what went wrong right, offering goodwill gestures, agreeing acceptable resolutions with residents, rectifying delays, changing decisions where appropriate	Yes	
<b>8</b>	<b>Continuous learning and improvement</b>		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? Based on 2020-2021 data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a formal approach to reasonable adjustments and including this in the complaints policy</li> <li>Introducing the option for customers to access to an independent specialist third-party where communication may have broken down</li> <li>Asking managers to speak to the customer at Stage 1 of the complaints process (previously only required at Stage 2)</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly review of live Right to Buy cases to identify any over 3 months</li> <li>• Following boiler installations ensuring that the boxing in of pipework is now checked and added to snagging list</li> <li>• Amend Notice to Quit procedure &amp; develop condolence letter for family members acting on behalf of deceased tenant</li> </ul>		
	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <p>a) residents? <a href="#">Service Review Group, Customer Access Panel, Tenant Committee and website</a></p> <p>b) the board/governing body? <a href="#">Regular reports to Group Leadership Team and Board</a></p> <p>c) In the Annual Report? <a href="#">Annual Report 2021</a></p>		
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p><a href="#">We have:</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• updated our definition of 'complaint' to use the exact wording used by the Ombudsman</li> <li>• published a Reasonable Adjustment Statement</li> <li>• strengthened our approach to sharing complaint information and lessons learned information with our residents</li> <li>• met with involved residents to test whether they consider the exclusions to the complaints policy to be reasonable and fair</li> <li>• devised Complaint Handling Training sessions for Team Leaders and Managers with the content designed around the new Code</li> </ul>		